

UKSPF Partnership Group
12th October 2023- 10am- 12noon
Belfast City Council, Adelaide St, Belfast

Members attending (In Person)

Name	Organisation	Sector
John Osborne (chair)	DLUHC	UK Govt
Celine McStravick	NICVA	Voluntary & Community
Adrian McCreesh	SOLACE (Mid Ulster District)	Local Govt
Suzanne Wylie	NI Commerce	Business
Lisa Toland	SOLACE (Belfast City Council)	Local Govt

Members attending (Remote)

Name	Organisation	Sector
James Dillon (On behalf of Professor Ian Greer)	Queens University Belfast	Higher Education & Skills
Julia Harrowsmith	NIO	UK Govt
Valerie McConville	CO3	Voluntary & Community

Other Attendees:

Cathy Keenan	Belfast City Council	For Enterprise Support Service Item 2.1
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Secretariat

The meeting was supported by DLUHC staff - Christine Robinson, Chris Taylor, Rebekah Bleakley, Chris Moore (in person) and Philip Lloyd, Benjamin Ekpenyong (remote).

Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor Ian Greer (Queens University Belfast) and Kate Beggs (The National Lottery Community Fund).

1. Chair's welcome

The Chair welcomed members and nominees to the seventh UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group meeting and noted:

- A declaration of members interests.

2. Progress since the last meeting

DLUHC and NIO officials provided an update on activities undertaken since the last meeting, including on the Northern Ireland budget position and potential implications for the fund, and UKSPF investment approval for the NI-wide Enterprise Support Service.

2.1 Northern Ireland Economic Support Scheme (NIESS)

Belfast City Council (BCC) officials provided an update on the NIESS scheme including; explanation of the delivery model, plans for marketing and upcoming launch, an update on the procurement process and future plans to develop the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northern Ireland.

Members acknowledged the hard work of BCC staff in implementing the project to date.

Members sought clarity regarding the distribution of the grant element of this programme. BCC officials confirmed that £5m in grants – a blend of capital and revenue - would focus on the Foundation and Growth stages of the Service to help encourage reach into new markets and stimulate export capabilities of enterprises. Grants would range from £1,000 to £4,000 and would require match funding from businesses.

2.2 Economic Inactivity

DLUHC officials updated members on the Economic Inactivity portfolio:

- Eighteen funded projects now in active delivery, having utilised 36% of the annual budget to date.
- 5,270 are currently engaged (21% of 25,000 participants lifetime target)
- DLUHC officials have visited a number of projects in Newry (Employ Me), Enniskillen (REAP) and in Belfast (Belfast Works Connect) and engagement continues.
- DLUHC ran a successful workshop for projects in August, with further engagement planned.
- DLUHC officials updated members on engagement with Labour Market Partnerships, noting potential for further engagement as the fund progresses.

Feedback was received from members on some technical issues projects had been encountering with the reporting application. Members acknowledged the work that the DLUHC contract managers have done to support projects and help them with this.

Members noted a planned Belfast City Council conference at the University of Ulster Belfast Campus in the New Year on inclusive employment, which would provide potential for synergy with UKSPF Economic Inactivity projects.

2.3 Multiply

DLUHC officials updated members on an application from the NI Department for Economy to utilise Multiply funding (subject to assessment and ministerial selection decision).

2.4 Local Business Package

DLUHC officials updated members on an application received from Invest NI for a package of measures designed to utilise UKSPF Support for Local Business funding (subject to assessment and ministerial selection decision).

3 Funding allocations and barriers

DLUHC officials updated the group on possible options for unallocated funds, noting the limited prospect to deliver via new competitions/project activities, given the delivery time remaining for the fund.

Members noted potential plans for communities and place activities, including (subject to ministerial steers), the aims, focus and possible next steps. Members noted local councils would be able to deliver as required with suitable capacity and processes in place to deliver within the time period.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting is likely to be in January 2024 (date tbc).